

## **PATERNAL INTEREST REGISTRY IN WISCONSIN**

### **Information For Putative (Possible) Fathers**

#### **When to File a Declaration of Paternal Interest**

A declaration must be filed before the birth of the child, within 14 days after the birth of the child, or if the putative father receives notice under s. 48.42(1g)(b) that the child's mother who is seeking to voluntarily terminate her parental rights for her child under one year of age has identified him as the father, he has 21 days after the date that the notice was mailed to file a declaration.

If a declaration was filed before July 1, 2006, it could be filed at any time before the father's parental rights were terminated.

#### **How to File a Declaration with the Paternal Interest Registry**

If a person believes he is the father of a child, he may register with the Wisconsin Paternal Interest Registry by filling out a Declaration of Paternal Interest, form number CFS-19A. The form asks for: the name and address of the possible father; the name and last-known address of the child's mother; and, the month and year of the birth or expected birth of the child. The form must be signed and verified under oath or affirmation before a notary public. If the person is under 18 years of age, his parent or legal guardian must also sign the form.

The form may be obtained at: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/forms/DCFS/CFS0019a.pdf> or by contacting the:

Wisconsin Paternal Interest Registry  
Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services  
Division of Children and Family Services  
P.O. Box 8916  
Madison, WI 53708-8916  
Phone Number: (608) 266-2744

There is no fee for filing a declaration of paternal interest.

#### **Consequences of Filing with the Paternal Interest Registry**

When a person properly files a declaration with the Paternal Interest Registry within the requirements and deadlines described above, the possible father will receive notice if the child is involved in a termination of parental rights court action. Filing a declaration of paternal interest does not establish parental rights to a child. The putative father will need to take further action to establish and protect his rights and responsibilities as a father or to relinquish his rights as a father.

## **Revocation**

A person, who has filed a declaration of paternal interest may revoke it at any time. To revoke a declaration, the individual must submit a statement in writing to the address above stating to the best of his knowledge and belief he is not the father of the child, or that another person has been legally declared to be the father of the child. The statement must be signed and verified under oath or affirmation before a notary public. If the person is under 18 years of age, his parent or legal guardian must also sign the form. A revocation form can be obtained at:

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/forms/DCFS/CFS0019b.pdf>.

## **Consequences of Not Filing a Declaration with the Paternal Interest Registry**

If a putative father does not file a declaration with the Paternal Interest Registry, he may not receive notice if a child he believes he is the father of is involved in a termination of parental rights action in court. Termination of the rights of a child's birth parents must occur before a child is adopted.

## **Who Can Access Information in the Paternal Interest Registry**

The Paternal Interest Registry is a confidential record. Information in the Registry may only be disclosed by order of a court or under the following exceptions:

1. When a declaration form is received, a copy will be sent to the mother of the child at her last known address. (The child's mother may respond in writing, but is not required to do so.)
2. Individuals who are authorized to file children's actions in court may also request that the Paternal Interest Registry be searched to determine if there is a registered putative father.

The Department of Health and Family Services will search its records and either provide a copy of the declaration form to the requesting party or will inform the requestor that no record exists. The information may only be used in the children's proceeding.

The Department of Workforce Development's Bureau of Child Support or county child support agencies may not access information within the Paternal Interest Registry.

## **Penalties**

A person making a false statement in a declaration, revocation or response to a declaration, that the person believes to be untrue, may be prosecuted for false swearing.

## **Prepared By:**

Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Family Services  
Division of Children and Family Services  
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